
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	514 4th Street, SE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	December 15, 2011	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	12-091	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Amanda Molson	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owners Altus Realty Partners, with plans prepared by Cunningham Quill Architects, PLLC, request concept approval for alterations to 514 4th Street, SE in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

Constructed in the mid-nineteenth century (likely late 1850s or early 1860s, which pre-dates the issuance of building permits), 514 4th Street, SE has until very recently housed Mount Joy Baptist Church. The style of the church is a simplified hybrid of Greek Revival and Italianate; the building features the low-sloped gable roof of the former, and the bracketed cornice, arched windows, and “teardrop” window hoods of the latter.

As evidenced in a historic photo of the church taken at the turn-of-the-century, changes to the building over time have included the application of white paint, replacement of windows, reconfiguration of the entry door opening, the construction of a retaining wall to replace the gently sloping berm, and the construction of a very simple (and somewhat unsightly) rear addition. The church is currently flanked by two long driveways, each of which is accessed by separate curb cuts off 4th Street.

In addition to the church, the site includes a three-story rowhouse (c. 1885) that has been altered over the years to accommodate administrative use. Most obvious is the relocation of the entry door from its original, raised location down to the basement level. Additionally, the window over the entry door was elongated, a side entrance was added, and the rear elevation received a lengthy exterior staircase that accesses the upper floors. Like the church, the rowhouse is largely devoid of green space other than the front yard.

Proposal

The congregation has relocated, and a new owner wishes to convert the property to house twelve residential units. Restoration-oriented work at the church building includes reinstating the sloping berm, closing the northern-most curb cut, replacing the front windows, paint stripping and masonry repairs, alterations to the entry door to reflect a 1913 drawing that modified the original arched opening, and removal of the later rear addition to institute a lawn. The existing asphalt shingle roof, which is minimally visible from the street due to the height of the building and the shallow slope of the roof, would be replaced in-kind.

Changes to the church building (in addition to the interior unit fit-out) would include the enlargement of ground-floor window openings on the side elevations in order to provide doors that access private patio and lawn space. Maintaining the vertical brick piers on the side elevations, a layout that suggests a pattern of pilasters and recesses very typical of the Greek Revival style, the side windows on the upper floors would be lengthened and widened to bring more light into the units. Maintaining the southern-most curb cut allows vehicular access to a new underground parking area located under the site. The above-ground driveway would be converted to garden space, and the access ramp for the new parking garage would be relatively gentle to avoid visible excess excavation.

Work on the rowhouse would be largely rehabilitative, including window and door replacement, paint stripping and repointing, and the removal of the later side entrance and metal staircase at the rear. A small rear addition would infill a portion of the dogleg at the rear of the house, and a lawn and patio area would replace the large shed currently sitting in the backyard. The entry door will be returned to its first-floor location and the window over the door returned to its original height. An entry door placed below the main entrance will provide access to the basement.

Evaluation

Just as one purpose of the preservation law is to retain and enhance properties that contribute to the character of a historic district, the law also encourages their adaptation for current use. The owner-architect team for this project, which also brought forward the Board-approved conversion of the landmark Maples estate on Capitol Hill, has married beneficial restoration plans with relatively minor alterations that provide a new use now that the congregation has relocated. The proposed rehabilitation and alterations are consistent with the character of the buildings and the Capitol Hill Historic District in massing, materials, fenestration, and overall design.

The plan to provide underground parking accessed via an existing curb cut allows the second curb cut to be closed, the front yard's sloping berm in front of the church to be restored, and much of the existing hardscape alongside and at the rear of the property to be converted to garden space. Removal of the church's later rear addition raises no preservation concerns, though the applicants may wish to restudy the small windows proposed for the rear elevation in hopes that larger windows could provide a more approachable rear elevation.

The most obvious change to the church building will be the enlargement of the upper-story side windows and the conversion of ground-floor side windows into entry doors. The enlarged openings respect the existing fenestration pattern and will be somewhat shielded from view due to a setback from the front elevation. As construction drawings are prepared, the side window pane configuration would merit further study in order to move away from the somewhat industrial overtones shown.

The planned restoration of the rowhouse is welcome, particularly the reinstatement of the original raised entry door. The proposed addition in the dogleg is minor in size and maintains some sense of a side setback. On the final drawings, the applicants should detail specifications for the new entry staircase, which appears somewhat commercial in plan. The basement stairs

might also benefit from placement parallel, rather than perpendicular, to the main staircase, which would avoid exposing so much of the building's foundation in the basement areaway. Because the proposed basement floor plan reserves this space for storage and mechanical rooms rather than living space, the access areaway and stairs should be as minimal as possible.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff.